7: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953)1957 SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

took his trophy a short distance into the forest, where its magical effect was exercised. But the supernatural power of the head could only be maintained when certain precautions were observed. Both the taker of the head and his wife were prohibited from sexual intercourse and were supposed to avoid looking upon any person who had recently indulged in the act. Accordingly, they lived very restrained and sequestered lives; the Dajeboiši spent most of his time lying in his hammock, and his wife was assigned special assistants to perform her household and garden chores.

The Dajeboiši was also responsible for sponsoring a series of ceremonies that took place during three successive rainy seasons following the return of the expedition. During the first, which took place shortly after the return of the war party, feather pendants were attached to the ears of the trophy head; certain clans had the prerogative of affixing the feathers of particular species of birds. Also, the eye sockets were sealed with beeswax and two paca teeth were placed across each eye. During the second phase of the ceremony, the ornaments and skin were stripped from the skull and it was retired to a corner of the men's house. The third part of the ceremony was devoted to stringing the enemy's teeth on a woven cotton belt. This ornament served as a permanent trophy of the slain enemy, and the skull was left to deteriorate in the men's house.

The final phase of the ceremony involved the greatest degree of intervillage participation, for it served as a ceremonial reunion of the *Darekši* or "mothers of the arrow." The Darekši was a society devoted to the celebration of Mundurucú arms, and included all adult males. At this time, a great feast was held, martial songs were sung, and the young boys were given instruction in the songs of the Darekši. At the conclusion of the celebration, the ceremonial cycle terminated and the Dajeboiši and his wife resumed their normal life.[3]

No special honor was accorded the warrior who captured children. They were turned over to his wife to rear as her own. Having been incorporated into the kinship system through adoption, the children were accorded the treatment appropriate to their relationship status. In time, they married members of the opposite moiety and lived through a normal Mundurucú life cycle. Contemporary informants affirm that captives were in no way treated as inferiors, although their origins were certainly remembered. Young men were said to have taken part in Mundurucú war parties, even in attacks against their native group. No cases of defection were reported.

GOALS OF WARFARE

George Fathauer (1954:110) maintains in a recent article that the Mohave "conception of war was largely non-instrumental: it was an end in itself." The Mundurucú looked upon warfare in much the same way; war was considered an essential and unquestioned part of their way of life, and foreign tribes were attacked because they were enemies by definition. This basic orientation emerged clearly from interviews with informants. Unless direct, specific questions were asked, the Mundurucú never assigned specific causes to particular

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

feather pendants that were suspended from either ear, the attachment of which was the central purpose of the *Inyenborotaptam*. Feathers from five species of birds were used in the ornamentation, and each type of feather could be attached only by the *Kiriší*, *Akai*, *Chunyún*, and *Parawá* clans, and those of the mutúm by the *Wítúm* clan. The *Karú* clan and subclan, the *Sau* subclan, and the *Warú* clan and subclan used the feathers of the red macaw; the *Kabá* clan attached parrot feathers; and the *Borón* clan contributed those of the gavião tawató. Those clans sharing the same feathers were always linked within the same phratry, and the appropriate bird species was usually an eponymous clan spirit of at least one of the groups.

The feather pendants could be no longer than the hair on the trophy head. For this reason, long-haired victims were especially prized and a woman's head was highly valued, although it was thought more valorous to kill an enemy warrior.

The sponsorship of these ceremonies was not the only duty of the taker of the trophy head. The social and religious role of the *Dajeboiši* had certain nonceremonial aspects that were, nonetheless, part of the larger ritual complex of warfare and head-hunting. Upon his return to the home village, the successful warrior assumed an enhanced status that endowed his person with an almost sacred aura and isolated him from normal relations with his fellow Mundurucú. Sexuality was considered especially dangerous both to the *Dajeboiši* and to his wife. They were enjoined against indulging in sexual intercourse with each other or with anyone else throughout the ceremonial period. The *Dajeboiši* could lose his power and fall into the previously discussed state of bad luck merely by looking at a *yapõ*, or wanton woman, and for this reason he always bathed very early to avoid meeting one on the path to the stream. Moreover, he was expected to have minimal contact with or sight of women other than his wife. Even she posed a threat to his special status, and they ate sitting back to back.

The *Dajeboiši* was expected to maintain a decorous and restrained attitude at all times. He spent much of his time lying in his hammock and gazing upward to avoid the contaminating sight of men who had recently had coitus. He could talk to the other men, but only on serious topics; trivial conversation and joking were considered inappropriate to his sacrosanct position. Although he slept in the men's house, the *Dajeboiši* did not partake of the communal meals there and ate only with his wife. But he was expected to be generous toward the other men and to keep tobacco under his hammock at all times for their use.

In addition to his ceremonial role, the *Dajeboiši* had an important function in the religious aspect of the hunting economy. His person and the trophy were thought pleasing to the Mother of the Game, and he brought the head into the forest whenever a hunting party embarked. The *Dajeboiši* did not, however, hunt nor did he accompany the other men. His mere proximity was sufficient to insure a good kill, and after two animals were slain he returned to the village. It was believed that if he were to remain longer in the forest he might step in the blood of a game animal and thereby lose the charm of the head.

The wife of the *Dajeboiši* occupied a delicate status also. Like her husband, she

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

had to exercise great care in her relations with others lest she look at a person who had recently had sexual relations. On days when hunting parties left for the forest she was supposed to remain in her hammock until late in the morning, for if she arose and moved about the game would run away. She was not allowed to bathe in the stream with the other women but washed her body from vessels of water brought to her house. Nor was the wife of the *Dajeboiši* supposed to work; a young woman from her *iboiwatitit* was chosen to draw water and wood for her and to perform household chores. Considerable authority over the other women was exercised by the *Dajeboiši*'s wife, and she felt free to send the women of the village to work in the garden or perform whatever services she desired.

The *Dajeboiši* and his wife were, according to some informants, obliged to maintain this regimen during the more than two years between the return of the war party and the final phase of the ceremonial cycle. Others thought that the prohibitions were not continually in force during this long period, but agreed that some restrictions were observed until the conclusion of the final ritual.

With the advent of the second rainy season after the taking of the trophy head, the *Dajeboiši* again issued invitations to the people of other villages, and all reunited for feasting. This phase of the ceremony is known as *Yašegon*, or Stripping the Skin from the Head. As the name indicates, the trophy head was skinned, its ornaments were removed, and the bare skull was then hung in a corner of the men's house.

Before the head was boiled and skinned, it was thrown on the ground and a group of men called "Vultures" batted it back and forth with sticks in imitation of the vulture's practice of tossing strips of carrion with its beak. The Vultures included all the bald men of the village and certain others who were thought to be really bald, although ordinary vision showed them to have hair on their heads. Previous to these proceedings, a number of old men, all of whom had at one time taken an enemy head, took the trophy head and tapped its top. If powder or any other matter fell from it, they announced that the *Dajeboiši* had broken an obligation. This was generally interpreted by all to mean that he had had sexual relations. In such a case his status terminated and no further observances were held, since the head had lost its power. If the test proved the owner of the head had kept his faith, the ceremony could continue.

The rites held during the first two rainy seasons were simple, and activities included only the decoration of the head during the first rainy season, its skinning during the second, and feasting on both occasions. The third winter, however, was the climax of the cycle, and festivities were lengthier and much more elaborate. The final phase of the ceremony was called *Taimetorõm*, or Hanging the Teeth, for on this occasion the teeth extracted from the trophy head were strung on a woven cotton belt. These belts were not worn, but were carefully guarded in a basket kept in the warrior's house.

But the most important ritual of the third rainy season was the all-night songfest of the *Darekši*, or Mothers of the Bow. The *Darekši* was a men's society; it was by no means exclusive in membership for all adult Mundurucú males belonged to

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

it, and it served as a general organization for persons of warrior status. The *Dajeboiši* was the leader and organizer of these festivities also and he customarily sent two messengers to the chiefs of the other Mundurucú villages to issue the following invitation: "Come, eat the hide of the game of the *Dajeboiši*. Come, drink *werú* and *mörí*. It is only a mouthful, but come." The chiefs then called their people together and announced, "They want us to come and eat and drink. Everyone who wishes may go." The invited villagers, who had long known of the impending ceremony and were expecting the invitation, cut their hair and ornamented themselves in the traditional Mundurucú style and set out the next day. Food had been amassed by the people of the host village and all settled down to feasting and completing their body painting.

On the day after their arrival, a member of the *Muchacha*[1] society, an exclusive group composed of old and valiant *Dajeboiši* who had mastered great knowledge of lore and songs, sounded the *pem*, a musical instrument used only by them. At this signal all the young boys, who had previously been tonsured and painted, fled into the forest and underbrush to hide from the men. The men then spread throughout the environs of the village and each captured a previously selected boy of the other moiety. The captor decorated the boy with necklaces and belts of glass beads (i.e., during the nineteenth century) and monkeys' teeth. By the time all had been assembled, dusk had already fallen, and the *Darekši* society returned to the village in a single file with the boys in the lead. All the men marched with bows and arrows set in release position. The women remained in the dwelling houses, for it was believed that any who saw the *Darekši* enter the village would be killed during the next war.

After entering the village, the men went to the house of the *Dajeboiši*, where they were served food and drink. A number of small ceramic vessels were laid out in a line and filled with various types of meat in a sauce made from the Brazil nut. Behind each bowl of meat was another filled with a drink prepared from sweet manioc. The line of men passed single file down the row of bowls, each man squatting on his haunches and taking one piece of meat with beijú (a flat manioc flour cake) and a sip of the sweet manioc drink. Then, still squatting, he moved to the right and took another piece of meat and beijú and another sip of the drink. When he reached the end of the line he returned to the beginning; the process was continued until all the food was eaten.

Certain precautions were taken with the drinks because of the sacred nature of the occasion. The Vultures had to eat apart from the other *Darekši*, for if one of the latter were to drink from the same vessel he would turn into a vulture when he died. Also, the sweet manioc drink could be made only by young girls and old women to avoid the threat of contamination of the drink by a drop of menstrual blood or semen from the vagina of a mature woman. The men were prohibited from sexual intercourse immediately before the ceremony for they too could contaminate the beverage and cause others who drank from the vessel to fall victims of the yellowing sickness, or *ujewaií*. To prevent this a shaman examined the

[1] The identity of this term with the Spanish word for 'girl' is an interesting but entirely independent parallel.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

ramic skillets. These utensils were much smaller than the copper pans, and each household owned one. Today, one toasting pan must serve a whole village not only because they are large enough to meet the needs of the population, but because they are expensive and beyond the means of most extended families. These pans are generally considered to be the property of the community in the savannah villages, and joint use of them serves as an integrating factor.[1]

In addition to their efforts in manioc processing, the women always seek company when they go to the stream to bathe and fetch water, gather firewood, and go to the gardens. Their sociability and coöperativeness on these occasions is reinforced by other considerations. First, a lone person is thought by the Mundurucú to be particularly subject to attack by malignant supernaturals; this fear is especially pronounced among the women. Also, a young woman leaves the village unaccompanied only when seeking an amorous escapade.

Accompanying the emphasis on coöperation in the economy is a corresponding avoidance of any form of open competition; competitive economic activity is absolutely nonexistent. Although a good worker is a highly valued person, prestige is actively sought mainly through accomplishments in hunting, knowledge of Mundurucú lore, and, formerly, in warfare. The Mundurucú rarely seek overtly to better anybody; even their play is noncompetitive with the exception of one strength-test game indulged in by the young men, consisting of an attempt by each of two op-

[1] *Caboclo* families frequently pool their resources to buy these pans also. At the time of our visit, they cost about 2,000 cruzeiros, or about $60 in 1952. The Brazilian ethnologist Darcy Ribeiro has commented that the poverty of the *caboclo* is so extreme that the availability of a copper toasting pan is frequently the chief reason for their settling in tiny hamlets.